

5 April 1977

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT NFIB MEETING

1. The accusation has been made that the CIA is incapable of objective assessment. The recent Team B exercise is pointed as a manifestation of that.

2. I'm not judging whether or not such is the case.

3. I am anxious to use the NFIB as my insurance policy against any claim of lack of objectivity in our assessments; whether this be due to a bias in the CIA, DIA, United States Air Force, State Department or any other element of the Intelligence Community. I therefore, as indicated at our last meeting, want to stay out of the minutia and nit-picking of assessments and estimates. I want very much to use the spectrum of views represented in this room to be sure that we are presenting objective assessments and estimates. I reemphasize this does not mean an agreed or compromised estimate which will be neither objective nor useful in many cases, but simply a waffle.

4. To this end, I especially request that with your individual experience in the NFIB process of approving estimates and assessments, that you alert me to occasions on which we should engage the NFIB in a particular estimate at an earlier stage than may be planned by the normal process. In short, you and I know the practical difficulties of engaging people at our level in detailed and serious conversation on a fundamental issue of an estimate when the deadline is staring us in the face. You also know that we cannot afford to meet three and four times on every estimate just to ensure that when the one estimate comes along in which there is a challenge of objectivity we catch it early in the game. In summary, I will count on you to alert me by either the subject matter or the direction in which an estimate is proceeding when you think that the NFIB should become engaged in it early on in order to avoid being locked into what may be termed an unobjective piece of work.

5. Finally, I am not passing judgment on the Team A/Team B concept, but I am saying that I don't ever want to be caught having to get a Team B from outside the Intelligence Community because the NFIB let me down in providing just that kind of counter poise.